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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
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CATTLE FEEDING SITUATION - NOVEMBER 1, 1953

The cattle feeding situation to the end of October indicates that the volume of cattle placed on feed this feeding season will be smaller than a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Decreases in cattle feeding are expected to be rather general with only a few States having as many or more cattle on feed as last year. The movement of feeder cattle into the Corn Belt since July 1 has been considerably below the volume moved a year earlier. Feed grain and hay supplies are generally adequate in the Corn Belt States except in parts of Kansas, and Missouri, but pastures are poor in much of the Corn Belt. Feed supplies are short in Texas and other sections of the central and southern Plains States hit by drought. However, prospects for wheat pastures have improved in that area recently. Feed supplies are adequate in the western feeding sections.

The decrease in Corn Belt cattle feeding is expected to be relatively less in the eastern Corn Belt than in the western Corn Belt States. Missouri will likely have a substantial reduction, and Kansas feeding will continue at or below the reduced level of last season.

Shipments of stocker and feeder cattle into the 9 Corn Belt States for which records are available for the months July through October were about 24 percent smaller than last year. All of the Corn Belt States showed decreases from last year during the July-October period. Largest decreases were in Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. Feeder cattle inshipments from public markets were also well below a year ago in Missouri and Kansas.

In the West, cattle feeding operations are expected to be below a year ago, although feeding activity in California is expected to continue at the high level of a year ago, and a few other States may equal last year. An estimated 307,000 cattle and calves were on feed on October 1 in California. Producers have been showing interest in custom feeding this season. Colorado's cattle feeding during the late fall and winter will be smaller than a year earlier with considerable reduction in farm feeding. Commercial feed yards will also have fewer cattle on feed in that State. Although feed supplies are abundant in the feeding sections of the northern mountain areas, farm feeding is expected to be greatly reduced and largely responsible for the smaller number to be fed in Idaho, Oregon, and other Western States. Numbers to be fed in Texas are expected to be low due to the limited feed supplies caused by the extended drought, however, as a result of recent rains wheat pasture prospects have improved materially, creating a demand for stocker cattle. It may be that by the first of next year the number on feed in Texas will be as large as a year ago, which was at a very low level.

The 1953 United States corn crop is expected to be 5 percent larger than the 1942-51 average. The crop is of generally excellent quality, maturing without serious frost damage. Hay production in 1953 is 1 percent larger than the 1952 crop and is adequate for feeding operations in most of the important feeding areas. Feed supplies are relatively short in an area extending from eastern Colorado and New Mexico through Kansas and Missouri.

The average price of feeder steers per hundred pounds at 8 markets during October was $7.64 below last October, and the average price for the July-October period this year was $8.59 lower than for the same period last year. Ranchers have

been reluctant to dispose of feeder cattle at prices that prevailed earlier this fall. At the same time many cattle feeders have found it more difficult to finance feeding operations this season following financial losses incurred last season. Feeder steer prices reached a fall low of $15.59 per hundred pounds at the 8 markets for the week ending October 8. The price of feeder steers for the week ending October 29 was $17.41 per hundred pounds, compared with an average of $24.20 for the same week a year earlier.

Of the cattle moving into feed lots a higher proportion are of lighter weights. The record for 8 feeder markets shows that during the July-October period the number of feeder calves and steers under 700 pounds shipped to country points was down 26 percent from last year, but made up 59 percent of the stocker and feeder cattle and calves going to the country, compared with 57 percent a year ago. The number of heavy feeder steers weighing over 900 pounds shipped from these 8 markets during July-October was down 44 percent from a year ago.

Special surveys made October 1 in the three leading cattle feeding States in the Corn Belt--Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska--showed 3 percent more cattle on feed than on October 1, 1952. However, the number placed on feed during July through September was estimated to be 6 percent smaller than a year earlier.

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